EDUCATING AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN:

MAKING A CASE FOR INDEPENDENT

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS

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Abstract

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Educating African-American Children: Making a Case for Independent Neighborhood Schools

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This document makes a strong case for choosing African-American independent neighborhood schools over the public schools. African-American children, particularly males are performing poorly in the public education system. There is evidence of high dropout rates, minimal academic achievement, and decreasing rates of college enrollment for black children. Poor educational experiences may lead to poor skills, low paying jobs, unemployment, criminal activity, and poverty. Educators have been attempting to repair the current educational system without significant results. African-American independent neighborhood schools are institutions that have been making a difference. With low per student costs, these islands of hope have motivated students to learn, helped students achieve above average scores on standardized tests, and sent many of their alumni on to educational and professional success. They work because of the commitment of teachers, parents, administrators, and students. Despite the evidence of achievement, these institutions face many obstacles such as public animosity and hopelessness, insularity, and financial strife.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The writer's interest in this subject is rather complex, but it radiates from the belief in African-American self-determination and self-fulfillment. Proper education of our children is believed to be a means of achieving this self-fulfillment. Although it has always been a struggle to be an African-American in a European and racist society, the frustrations of African-Americans have never been so implosive as they are today. Where once, the greatest fear of the African-American community was invasions and lynching performed by members of the dominant culture, the African-American community now fears the youth of its own community even more than outside intruders. This is painfully evident in large urban areas, like Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. The actions of far too many African-American youth seem to reflect a lack of self-love, self-respect, and self-esteem. These variables are often manifested in self-destructive and community-destructive behaviors such as drug abuse and distribution, unplanned adolescent pregnancy, gang involvement, criminal activity, and suicide. Numerous solutions have been attempted but with limited impact.

Statement of the Problem

African-American children face many problems that include, but are not limited to, crime, poverty, infant mortality, unplanned pregnancy, drug abuse, and not the least, inadequate education. In the eyes of some, an adequate education has some power to alleviate

the first five of these. It is the hope of this writer to provide evidence of the inadequacy of the current system of public education for African-American children and to propose a system of private or public independent neighborhood or alternative schools for African-American children.

African-Americans, and other groups, have long believed in the power of education to help create successful, competent, and law abiding citizens of this country. Education has been viewed as the panacea for the many ills of society. The fact that Americans are experiencing more crimes and greater poverty stands in opposition to these beliefs, however. Or do they? It may be that the type and quality of education that many Americans receive fail to prepare them to be productive, successful, and honest Americans. If America is failing to properly educate its middle-class white children to compete in the world, it is surely doing far worse in education its most needy: the poor and minorities.[1]

African-American children compare poorly with other minority groups and with the white majority in terms of academic achievement, disciplinary problems, dropout rates, and post-secondary enrollment. Part of the problem may be differences in the learning styles of African-American children and the personality conflicts between non-African-American teachers and African-American children. The males of this ethnic group seem to be particularly affected by these issues. These elements, as well as the

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[1] Amos N. Wilson. Awakening the Natural Genius of Black Children. (New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 1992), 6.

possible unfortunate consequences of inadequate education of African-American children will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 details the many benefits of the increasingly popular neighborhood or alternative schools of yesterday and today. Yet no solution has been found to be perfect. Thus Chapter 3 will terminate in a discussion of the obstacles and issues that affect independent neighborhood schools and the children who attend them.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was two-fold: first, to examine the literature relative to the education of African-American students provided by our public educational system, and, secondly, to propose an alternative educational system for African-American students.

Limitations

The writer cautions the reader of the findings of this study by acknowledging the following limitations:

1. The availability of appropriate related literature was limited, as was the availability of experts in this field.

2. Several of the points, regarding the public educational system's focus on minority students, were not restricted to African-American students.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Exploring the Need for Intervention

African-American children fare poorly in the public school system compared to white students and most other groups of minorities. Without giving credence to the idea of inferior mental abilities, many ponder why this is so. But given that this poor performance is a reality, of what consequence can this problem be for the children, their futures, and this society?

In 1991, the National Center for Education Statistics estimated that African-American students comprised 6.7% of all students in public schools.[1] A 1990 report found that central city schools with high minority enrollment failed to challenge their students by the absence of advanced placement programs.[2] From kindergarten through twelfth grade, African-American children are on the lowest rung of the academic achievement ladder. Several facts illustrate this point. Results of the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) reveal that, while African-American students are increasingly scoring in higher ranges, the gap between these students and the majority group is still quite wide.[3]

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[1] National Center for Education Statistics, The Condition of Education (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1993), 116.
[2] J. S. Ancarrow. Selected Data on Minority Participation in the Public Schools. Survey Report (1990), 53, EDRS, ED 325584, microfiche.
[3] Florence. I. Stevens. "Opportunity to Learn and Other Social Contextual Issues: Addressing the Low Academic Achievement of African-American Students," Journal of Negro Education 62 no. 3 (1993): 227-231.

In mathematics, African-Americans made strident gains between 1973 and 1990, but the wide gap between the mathematical achievement of whites and African-Americans has not narrowed significantly in the past decade. Although 99% of all 17-year-old African-American students were at or above average in solving and understanding basic math skills, only 33% were able to complete moderately complex procedures and reasoning and a mere 2% were at or above average on performing multi-step problems and algebraic operations.[4] Black students, evaluated at ages 9, 13, and 17, scored significantly below white students of the same ages in science proficiency and failed to make significant within group gains from 1977 to 1990. Although Blacks have made strident gains in reading performance over the past two decades, the last decade witnessed no improvement in the writing skills of African-American students overall. Even more important is the fact that other minority students, who often encounter language barriers, outperformed African-American students in reading and writing skills.[5] A study of eighth grade students, labeled "at risk", demonstrated that, even when the variables for gender and socioeconomic status are controlled, African and Hispanic American students were increasingly likely to perform below basic proficiency levels than were white students.[6]

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[4] US Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Digest of Education Statistics 1992 (Washington D.C.: US Department of Education), 36.

[5] Eugene H. Owen. "Trends in Academic Progress: Achievement of American Students in Science, 1970-90, Mathematics, 1973-90, Reading, 1971-90, and Writing 1984-90. Data Summary," (1991), 12-29, EDRS, ED 340751, microfiche.

[6] Phillip Kaufman, et al. Characteristics of At-risk Students in NELS: 88. (1992), 92, SilverPlatter, ERIC ED 349369, microfiche.

It is well known that students who are not challenged or who feel inferior academically to other students are more likely to be pushed out or to drop out of the school system.[7] African-American students, over the past decade, have a high school dropout rate of approximately 14% nationwide.[8]

Of the approximately 80% of African-American students who manage to graduate from high school, only 30% continue on to any type of post-secondary education.[9] The implication is that the majority of African-American students are not receiving the type of education that would permit them to play positive and active roles in building better communities or nations. In 1990, African-Americans comprised a mere 9% of enrolled college students with the majority attending either two-year colleges, vocational schools, or private colleges.[10] Part of this is due to low scores on tests, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT), utilized for making choices in college admissions. In 1990-91, African-American students scored less than any other ethnic group on the SAT verbal section and nearly 100 points less than white students on the same section.[11] With increasing college tuition rates, higher standards for college admissions, and fewer scholarships and grants offered, it appears that this trend, of low college enrollment for African-American students, will continue.

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[7] F. Philip Rice. The Adolescent: Development, Relationships, and Culture. 7th edition (Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1992), 237.
[8] US Department of Education. Digest of Education Statistics (1992), 42.
[9] Ibid., 79.
[10] US Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement. The Condition of Education (Washington, D.C.: US Department of Education, 1992), 352.
[11] US Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics, 94.

Why aren't African-American children succeeding in the public school system? Perhaps an examination of the purposes, goals and overall condition of American public education can partially answer this question. According to Marshall, the educational system in this country is designed to advance and perpetuate the society by indoctrinating the youth with philosophies and reality orientation that serve to maintain the status quo.[12] An example of this idea, which occurs at all levels, is the stressing of individual competition rather than group cooperation. Children who perform above average are often given special treatment, such as, field trips, and projects that other students are denied. Students who score high on particular tests are told that they will receive special treats. Tracking and ability groupings can create in children academic inferiority and superiority status. Although cooperative groups and pairings are becoming increasingly popular in the public schools, many schools emphasize excellence at the expense of cooperation.

Secondly, although competition is an important element in American education, it appears that many American students are not receiving the type of training that would allow them to compete in the larger society. This is particularly evident in the areas of math and science. According to the 1992 edition of the Condition of Education Report, produced by the United States Department of Education, elementary aged students from the United States generally scored lower in mathematics than the same aged students

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[12] Patricia Marshall, "Schools, Teacher Preparation, and Afrocentricity: Is There a Possibility for Connection?" Paper presented at the National Conference of the Association of Black Women in Higher Education, June 1991, 5, EDRS, ED 337438, microfiche.

from Korea, Taiwan, and the former Soviet Union. Thirteen year-olds from the United States fared worse than all other students from larger countries with the exception of Spain. In the science arena, the United States' 9-year-olds scored below Korea and Taiwan's 9-year-olds but above those in Spain, Canada, and the former USSR. Taiwan, Korea, and the former USSR scored above the United States' 13-year-olds in science.[13] The National Education Commission of Excellence in Education asserted recently that the current system of education is imperiled by a growing tide of mediocrity that is encouraged by "...lax standards and misguided priorities in the schools".[14] African-American children are performing poorly within an educational system that is already inferior to the educational systems of many other industrialized nations. Thus, Wilson appears correct in his assertion that African-American children need to outperform white children if they plan on contributing to society and the world.[15]

Another reason that African-American students are not progressing appropriately in the public school system may be due to conflicts in the learning styles of the children and the prescribed teaching styles of their instructors. Although not all black children learn in the same manner, Willis, in a review of the learning styles of African-American children, found several disparities between the styles of learning and that of teaching some African-American children.[16]

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[13] US Department of Education, Condition of Education, (1992), 121.
[14] Wilson, Awakening the Genius, 6.
[15] Ibid., 6-7.
[16] Madge Gill Willis, "Learning Styles of African-American Children: A

We have already established the notion that the public school system is currently devised to support the Euro-American status quo and, thus, operates from a Euro-American cultural style. The cultural styles of African-American students may differ from those of Euro-Americans and thus affect how African-American students learn in the classroom. Research shows that African-Americans, as opposed to whites, are more people than object- or task-oriented, field dependent than field independent, impulsive than reflective, and able to attend to several stimuli simultaneously than singular or routine oriented ones.[17] White students were more likely to be more self-controlled, more judgmental, and less adaptive than African-American students when measured on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. It is primarily the learning styles of white children that is perpetuated in the classroom and which lead to labels of high achievement. The characteristic learning styles of African-American and other non-whites lead to labels of low achievement.[18]

Hilliard believes that schools currently teach all children in an atomistic-objective style which utilizes breaking down experiences into smaller parts and distancing oneself from the experiences.[19] This type of education emphasizes rules, conformity, egocentrism, schedules, and precision. It is implied that, in order for African-American children to learn in the school environment, the teaching style needs to be synthetic-personal; that is, utilizing the

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Review of the Literature and Interventions," The Journal of Black Psychology 16, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 47-65.

[17] Ibid., 49-50.

[18] Ibid., 52-53.

[19] Asa Hilliard, "Alternatives to IQ Testing: An Approach to the Identification of Gifted Minority Children," San Francisco State University, (1976), 41.

type of teaching that brings elements of an experience together in order to understand its true meaning and how it relates to the learners. Synthetic-personal styles emphasize creativity, approximation, integration of facts, globalness, and spontaneity.

Competition is inherent in the public education system, yet African-Americans and some other groups of minorities have a proclivity for working in large cooperative group settings.[20] As cited by Willis, several researchers believe that this preference for cooperation over competition is a survival strategy used by blacks that has helped them endure hardships imposed by the United States. Whatever the reasons, researchers have demonstrated that cooperative learning groups are particularly effective for African-American students. Crosby and Owen assert that for African-American and Hispanic students cooperative learning seems to be a productive alternative to tracking and ability grouping.[21]

A related issue involves not only how African-American children are taught but what content is taught to them. In the investigation of learning styles, it was found that, African-American children operate best when taught in a holistic manner in which subjects and events are interrelated. It is only logical that individuals assign more meaning to those events and conditions which have relevance to the individual's particular life. Some researchers, such as Wilson and Hale-Benson, suggest a curriculum

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[20] Shirley A. Jackson, "Accelerating Academic Achievement for Poor Black Students," Paper presented at the Conference of the National Alliance of Black School Educators, Dallas, November 16-20, 1990, 12-15, EDRS, ED 327625, microfiche.

[21] M. S. Crosby and E. M. Owens. "The Disadvantages of Tracking and Ability Grouping: A Look at Cooperative Learning as an Alternative," 3-5, SilverPlatter, ERIC, ED 358184, microfiche.

for African-American children which includes awareness, knowledge, and respect for African and African-American history and culture.[22] Not only could teachers increase students' interest and potential to learn by linking various subjects such as math, science, and reading to past and present achievements of people of African descent, but they may simultaneously enhance students' self-concepts and self-esteem.[23] Unfortunately, only 42% of new teachers strongly agreed that they were adequately trained to teach students from various backgrounds and, after the first year of teaching, even fewer agreed strongly on this issue.[24]

Patricia Marshall, and other opponents of the current push for multiculturalism, and what has been deemed Africentrism, in the public school, contend that the basic needs of all students apply to African-American students as well.[25] These schooling needs include reading, writing, test-taking, thinking, and speaking skills. According to these educators and scholars, African-American success depends on students' abilities and willingness to adapt their learning styles to that of the dominant culture not vice-versa. In addition, African-American students should learn to be more persistent and to perform mundane or seemingly irrelevant tasks complacently.[26]

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[22] Wilson, Awakening the Natural Genius, 96-97.
Janice Hale-Benson, Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles, revised edition, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 59-70.

[23] Jawanza Kunjufu, Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys, Vol. II (Chicago: African-American Images, 1986), 31-41.

[24] Digest of Education Statistics, 1992, 98.

[25] Patricia Marshall, "Schools, Teacher Preparation, and Afrocentricity: Is There a Possibility for Connection?," 10, SilverPlatter, ERIC, ED 337438, microfiche.

[26] ibid., 22.

Cultural biases on tests of mental or cognitive abilities have been long standing and much-debated issues for several decades. Although beyond the scope of this report, test bias may involve anything from the content of particular tests to the administration of tests. For example, intelligence or IQ tests, such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scales and the Stanford-Binet, are timed tests. The concept of time, as viewed by many African-Americans, is quite different than that viewed by many members of the dominant culture. Thus differences on timed tests may not reflect differences in ability but differences in cultural styles.[27] Also, it has been implied that African-Americans' manners of processing visual information may differ from that of the dominant culture. This has important implications for African-American students taking tests which may involve analyzing or completing tasks of visual perception. Educator and researcher, Janet Helms, suggests that many of the discrepancies witnessed between blacks and whites on cognitive ability tests are due to cultural rather than biological or environmental differences. She advances a culturalist perspective as an option for examining measurements designed to assess intelligence, mental and cognitive abilities, and scholastic aptitude based on cultural equivalency.[28]

Issues Particular to African-American Males

While it is a fact that a majority of African-American students are performing below standard and are at risk for disciplinary

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[27] Willis, "Learning Styles of African-American Children," 50-51.
[28] Janet Helms, "Why is There No Study of Cultural Equivalence in Standardized Cognitive Ability Testing?", American Psychologist, 47 no. 9 (1992): 1083-1101.

problems and dropping out of school, African-American male students appear to be suffering disproportionately in the public education system.[29] In Milwaukee, for example, although African-American males account for only 27% of the student population, they comprise nearly twice that number of all suspensions.[30] Coincidentally, according to Green and Wright, in that city's school district, 80% of these Black males earn less than a 'C' average in high school.[31]

According to Kunjufu, although African-American males begin school in kindergarten or first grade highly motivated and interested in learning, this enthusiasm has been defeated by the fourth grade. African-American males then begin a gradual decline in academic achievement that lasts throughout their educational careers.[32] This is evident in the facts that fewer African-American males graduate from high school, attend college, and matriculate successfully through college than other groups.[33] Secondly, although African-American students comprise an alarming 41% of students placed in special education classes nationally, African-American males are 85% of this population compared to merely 15% of females.[34] Students in special classes for the educable mentally retarded and the emotionally

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[29] R. L. Green and D. L. Wright, "African-American Males: A Demographic Study and Analysis", Paper presented a the National Workshop of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, March 27-29, 1991, 8, EDRS, ED 346167, microfiche.
[30] Derrick Bell, " The Case for a Separate Black School System," The Urban League Review, 11 no. 1-2 (1987): 136-157.
[31] Green and Wright, "African-American Males," 31.
[32] Kunjufu, Countering the Conspiracy, Vol. II., iii.
[33] Shirley A. Biggs, "Plight of Black Males in American Schools: Separation May Not Be the Answer," Negro Educational Review, 43 no. 1-2 (Jan-Apr 1992): 11-16.
[34] Patrick Grant, "Using Special Education to Destroy Black Boys," Negro Educational Review, 43 no. 1-2 (Jan-Apr 1992): 17-21.

handicapped do not earn regular high school diplomas thus, limiting their post-high school chances for meaningful employment and pursuit of post-secondary education. A 1993 study, by Dauber et al, found that children in the inner city who were retained in grades one through four were most likely to be African-American males whose parents were less educated than those of nonretainees.[35] With so many obstacles and setbacks it should be of little wonder that only 53% of low income African-American males completed high school in 1988.[36]

Why are African-American males afflicted with academic failure? Two proposed reasons are that the African-American males' culture shuns and ridicules academic achievement among its members as being something negative and that the particular learning styles of African-American males are primarily in direct opposition to the common style of teaching in the public schools.

It appears that African-American male students have developed a defense mechanism against this belief in their inherent academic and intellectual inferiority by negating the importance of education and resisting attempts to become well educated. Numerous studies and research have shown that minority children, particularly males, view academic achievement in a negative light and associate it with being unpopular, socially misfitted, and behaving like members of the dominant culture. Successful African-American male students are often shunned and ridiculed by other

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[35] S. L. Dauber et al. "Characteristics of Retainees and Early Precursors of Retention in Grade: Who is Held Back?" Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, v.39 no. 3 (July 1993): 326-343.

[36] Green and Wright, "African-American Males," 34.

African-American male students. In fact, Rice found that many academically successful male minorities had impaired self-concepts and low self-esteem.[37] This type of thinking results in an alienated self-concept, according to Wilson, which may help the individual feel good about himself initially but which, in the long run, fails to help the individual develop and utilize skills and information that are in his own best interests.[38]

This negative concept of academic achievement of African-American males may also be influenced by the perception that the school environment operates in opposition to the learning styles of African-American male students. We have already determined that the learning styles of African-American children, in general, may differ markedly from those styles which are taught in the typical American school. Also, male students, in general, tend to take a more active role in the classroom than female students. The kinesthetic and movement oriented cultural styles of African-Americans plus the normal activity level of males may, unduly, place African-American male students at risk for being labeled "hyperactive" or "behavior disordered" by teachers who misunderstand these students' cultural and gender styles.[39]

Working With the Public Education System

Several educators and scholars propose that the recruitment of African-American teachers, particularly males, in the public schools, would improve the behaviors and learning abilities of African-

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[37] Rice, The Adolescent, 239.

[38] Wilson, Awakening the Natural Genius, 110.

[39] Jawanza Kunjufu, Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys, Vol. III, (Chicago: African-American Images, 1990), 9-12.

American students.[40] According to these scholars, African-American children are taught by a largely female Euro-American teaching force. In fact, only 5% of all teachers are of African descent and approximately 1% of all teachers are both African and male.[41] The implication is that African-American students, particularly males, may advance through the public education system never or rarely being formally taught by someone who may have a better understanding of their gender and cultural behaviors. Because of the deficit of positive African-American role models in the African-American community, African-American male students having a teacher who is of the same ethnicity and gender may serve as an impetus for greater self-esteem and enhanced self-concept. Although there are several colleges with incentive programs for prospective African-American and other minority teachers, African-Americans are still not joining the teaching force in large numbers.[42] Some researchers, such as Marshall, assert that the predominantly white female teaching force is fully capable of contributing to the success of African-American children given that these teachers have high expectations and concentrate on teaching African-American students the fundamentals of education: reading, writing, and speaking.

In order for African-American students to succeed in the current system, according to Marshall, African-American students and communities need to accomodate the school environment. Her

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[40] Kunjufu, Countering the Conspiracy Vol. III, 34-37.
[41] Marshall, "School, Teacher Preparation, and Afrocentricity," 2-3.
[42] Nathan Hare and Julia Hare, The Hare Plan, (San Francisco: The Black Think Tank, 1991), 52-56.

view is consistent with others who believe that changes need to be made primarily in the students, their families and communities rather than initiating drastic alterations in the public school system. Marshall insists that "...schools cannot act in the authentic educational interest of African-American students" because the purpose of school is to perpetuate and improve society while maintaining the status quo of which African-Americans are not a part. She believes that the African-American family and community are responsible for teaching African-American students their culture, morals, and values.[43] Although a bit more liberal, this blame-the-victim philosophy is much like the type of education forced by the United States upon Native American, Puerto Rican, and Mexican cultures. According to Spring, these groups were subjected to a deculturalization process through the public schools which sought to destroy these groups' indigenous languages, customs, and values.[44]

Besides these partial solutions, several African-American scholars have proposed complete solutions or plans for properly educating African-American children within the realms of the public school system. A particularly thorough plan developed by Nathan and Julia Hare, has numerous profound components yet it has not been adopted by any known state, school system, or agency to date. The Hare Plan, as it is known, involves contributions of the home, the community, and society in constructing an optimal learning environment for African-American children. In the home sphere, the Hares propose to ensure that parents or primary caregivers are

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[43] Marshall, "School, Teacher Preparation, and Afrocentricity," 15.
[44] Joel Spring, The American School 1642-1993, 3rd ed., (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 130-185.

actively involved in children's education by teaching parents to be supportive and motivating of children. Also, parents in college should be able, when possible, to teach in the lower grades while some African-American parents may need basic instructions in the basics of academia (math, reading, and writing) in order to better assist their children. An innovative new role of parenteacher[sic] would serve as a liaison between parents and teachers. The parenteacher would assist parents in being better parents without actually usurping the parents' authority or position. This improvement may be evidenced through parent-parent, parent-child, or parent-teacher activities designed to enhance bonding, partnerships, cooperation, and self-esteem. The home sphere also includes appropriate discipline techniques including corporal punishment, when necessary, that must be preventive rather than corrective and extended to include teachers as agents of discipline, as well. The implication is that, without discipline in either the home or school environment, learning cannot take place.[45]

The second realm in educating African-American children and families is the vital role of the community. The Hares argue that, because of the apparent lack of enthusiasm for academic excellence in the African-American community, it is necessary to create a more positive and stimulating view of academia similar to that of athletics. For instance, literary passages, to be studied and mastered, may be converted into musical lyrics and performed to increase class participation and convey the interconnection of materials (literature and music). Also, suggested are academic competitions and games

[45] Hare and Hare, The Hare Plan, 1991, 102-103.

which bring immediate gratification through recognition, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Students give back to the community through helping those in need such as the elderly or the handicapped and the community supports its schools through providing encouragement by way of attending school-sponsored events and tutoring students.

Finally, society and the school must, reciprocally, contribute to the education of African-American students as described by Nathan and Julia Hare. Again, academic competition is working within the realities of society. Western society encourages competition in nearly every respect and African-American children must learn to compete effectively if they are to make gains in this society. Children must adhere to societal realities in other ways as well. The authors promote the return of spelling bees and debates for all students. They believe that such exhibitions allow for positive growth through teaching children to "stand and deliver", eloquently address an audience, and assert themselves. These are manners in which the ways of society affect the school's environment which has the potential to affect society, especially in the near future.

According to the Hares, the primary opposition to the Hare Plan and the serious education of African-American children will be European-Americans. Their opposition will be heard because they, like all Americans, support the public schools through tax dollars. Since the purpose of education is to promote and maintain the status quo, whites may feel threatened by an educational paradigm which seeks to properly prepare every African-American man, woman, and child to set and achieve goals incongruent with Western society's

status quo.[46] Thus, it would appear that the promotion of a black agenda and positive education for African-American children in the public school would be more difficult to achieve than in African-American controlled independent neighborhood schools. Finally, this synopsis of the Hare Plan, although designed for public school systems, can be and is, in part, utilized at independent neighborhood schools.

[46] ibid., 121.

CHAPTER 3

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

History of Independent Neighborhood Schools

Independent neighborhood institutions have enjoyed a long history in this country. According to Ratteray, African-Americans had created and controlled over eighteen colleges and 55 academies and high schools before the turn of the twentieth century.[1] Desegregation and integration of the 1950s and 1960s helped turn the tide against independent minority institutions. According to Green and Wright, integration actually amounted to the assimilation of minority students into the white American cultural scheme, maintaining African-Americans in positions of socioeconomic inferiority.[2] African-American institutions of learning were hurt as well. After the Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka (1954) decision much of the funding for independent schools was redirected to those institutions sponsored by the government.[3] Furthermore, some African-American supporters and creators of neighborhood schools relinquished their concepts of self-help and self-determination in lieu of expectations and promises of equal rights and enhanced preparedness for African-American students. Eventually, some went so far as to oppose independent neighborhood institutions as being

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[1]Joan D. Ratteray, "Independent Neighborhood Schools: A Framework for the Education of African-Americans," Journal of Negro Education, 61 no. 2 (Spring 1992): 139.

[2]R. L. Green and D. L. Wright, "African-American Males: A Demographic Study and Analysis," Paper presented to the National Workshop of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, (March 27-29, 1991), 22, EDRS, ED 346167.

[3]J. D. Ratteray, "Independent Neighborhood Schools," 140.

separate and unequal. Thus, for a time, the enrollment of students in and the number of African-American neighborhood schools were significantly reduced.[4] Soon, however, some African-American parents and educators became disillusioned and realized that the presence of children of higher socioeconomic classes and races in a classroom had little positive impact on the learning abilities of African-American students. Once again, they began creating, supporting, and enrolling their children in independent neighborhood schools. Currently, the over 350 existing institutions vary widely in stated purposes, curricula, staffing, student selection processes, and other factors. However, as reported by the Institute for Independent Education, the majority of these schools share several characteristics. They are primarily located in urban, non-affluent areas, serving African-American, Hispanic, and Asian American children, and insist upon parental cooperation and participation. They maintain a closeknit, family-like environment within the school setting.[5]

There are many scholars and educators who support the idea of neighborhood schools for African-American students at all levels, particularly the primary and secondary levels. Joan Davis Ratteray, now founder and president of the Institute for Independent Education, has long been an advocate of alternative schooling for minority children. Prior to the 1950s, the mass education system which had worked well for newly arrived immigrants from Europe, was assumed to do the same for all future and present minority groups including African-Americans. However, many minority

[4]ibid., 140-141.
[5]Institute for Independent Education, Independent Neighborhood Schools Fact Sheet, (Washington, D.C., October 1993), unnumbered page.

children did not blend into the melting pot of traditional America. They were even alienated from the schooling process. This caused minority parents, who similarly felt a sense of alienation from the process of education, to extract their children from the public schools and initiate private neighborhood schools or put their children in such schools. It was soon found that many of these private schools enriched children's educational opportunities using much fewer resources than the public schools. Parents, who placed their children in independent neighborhood schools, felt enriched and, simultaneously, enriched the independent educational system. They became actively involved with the school by being founding teachers, participating in real decision making and fundraising activities, and serving in other necessary capacities.

Besides serving the interest of a limited number of children, independent neighborhood schools also serve as models for other schools, public and private, and for making changes in educational policies and implementation especially as it relates to minorities. More specifically, Ratteray asserts that, these neighborhood schools can provide excellent examples of parental accountability and power in any school setting. Secondly, the schools may serve as paradigms for successfully educating a growing immigrant and minority population of school children. Independent neighborhood schools, which share their expertise and experiences with other educators and other schools, create the potential for initiating more independent neighborhood schools that truly educate students.[6]

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[6]J. D. Ratteray, "One System is Not Enough: A Free Market Alternative for the Education of Minorities," American Education, 20 no. 9 (Nov. 1984), 9.

Green and Wright, in a 1991 article discussing the necessity for all-Black male immersion schools, elaborated on the neglect and abuse of minority children in the public schools. The school serves as an important socialization process which helps shape children's concepts of self-identification and self-worth. According to Green and Wright, "...[self identification] contributes to the development of personality, maturity, and self-concept. Part of this process begins in a historical context".[7] The historical context to which these authors refer is that which places African-Americans and their ancestors in active and contributing roles in the development of the world rather than the passive or nonexistent roles typical of most public school curricula. Academic achievement is better achieved by using aspects of the children's cultural and religious background, thus, giving more meaning to the mastering of all subjects.[8] Some writers confirm that African-American male students are dealt damaging blows because they are viewed differently than all other students by a predominantly non-black, non-male teaching force. African-American male students are disproportionately labeled as having behavioral problems, hyperactivity, and academic deficiencies even when their behaviors are the same as female or non-black students. According to its proponents, all-black male immersion schools are publicly supported alternative schools that ought to be initiated and continued in order to save African-American men from prisons, homicide, drugs, and other ills of society manifested from rage and miseducation.[9]

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[7]R. L. Green and D. L. Wright, "African-American Males," 29-30.
[8]J. D. Ratteray, "One System is Not Enough," 4-6.
[9]R. L. Green and D. L. Wright, "African-American Males," 28-29.

African-American parents and concerned citizens of Milwaukee are going so far as to request independent neighborhood schools which better serve their children. They are attempting to demand an accountable separate black school system supported by public funds. Black children comprise the majority of that city's public schools which are, thus, already separated and segregated by effect of de facto.[10] By tenth grade, over 40% of African-American students test far below grade level in reading skills, while nearly 40% are low performing in math skills by the same grade level. The same levels and subject rates for white students are much less comparably. African-American male students fare worse than African-American females. Academically, 80% of Milwaukee's Black males achieve less than a 'C' average in high schools and graduate with less than 'C' averages. Similarly, although they constitute less than 30% of the Milwaukee Public Schools, African-American males account for half of all suspensions in the Milwaukee school district.[11]

Green and Wright advocate alternative schools for African-American children for several reasons including the discrimination and neglect witnessed in the public schools. Alternative schools, designed especially for African-American male children, are intended to reduce the negative view of academic achievement held by many African-American males and to increase this group's exposure to positive black male role models. Hare and Hare agree that there exists an anti-intellectual thrust in the black community, particularly among the youth of that community, which ridicules

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[10]Derrick Bell, " The Case for a Separate Black School System," The Urban League Review, 11 no. 1-2 (1987): 136-157.
[11]ibid., 137-138.

children who enjoy studying, performing above classmates, and gaining the positive attention of adults.[12]

Characteristics and Qualities of Independent Neighborhood Schools

What designates these institutions as valuable alternatives for African-American children and their families? The history of independent neighborhood schools for African-Americans is one of continuity and change. Initially, blacks were refused public school education during the post Civil War era, and thus, began their own schools. As early as the 18th Century, free Africans began their own schools in Boston due to the brutality and harsh treatment students of color received from whites.[13] During the 1950s and 1960s, African-Americans turned their educational interests to integration as the answer to academic success. Currently, although many African-American parents still believe that integration is the key to successful schooling, some have resolved that the entire public education system is ineffective especially for minority children. For these disillusioned parents, there are over 350 independent schools that serve a primarily black population.[14] But what factors determine their success?

There are several components that contribute to making African-American independent schools successful. The primary contribution seems to be commitment of teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Secondly, the basic curricula that are offered

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[12]Nathan Hare and Julia Hare, The Hare Plan, (San Francisco: The Black Think Tank, 1991), 65-66.
[13]Ratteray, "Independent Neighborhood Schools," 138-139.
[14]Green and Wright, "African-American Males," 37.

at neighborhood schools and its relevance to the lives of the children serve as contributors of success. Lastly, the context in which children are taught may play a pivotal role in the success or failure in teaching them.

The teachers at African-American neighborhood schools, according to the Institute for Independent Education, tend to be female and educated with a minimum of a baccalaureate degree. In a survey of approximately one-third of the minority independent schools, one-half reported that losing teachers due to salary competition has not been an issue. The caring and positive learning environment that teachers project is one of the primary school's characteristics noted by alumni of independent schools.[15] Many educators and researchers firmly believe that teachers' high expectations of students positively influence the students' academic achievement and behavior.[16] In successful independent schools, teachers have such high, yet realistic, expectations of their students. They often work with each child at his or her own pace.

Contrary to public opinion, independent neighborhood school parents are neither wealthy nor highly educated. In fact, a research report by Ratteray and Shujaa, indicates that nearly 60% of students in alternative schools have family incomes of less that $29,000 and households consisting of two to five members. Only 14% of these families were single parent headed households, much less than the norm found among the general African-American population.[17]

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[15]Institute for Independent Education, On the Road to Success: Students at Independent Neighborhood Schools, (Washington D.C.: Institute for Independent Education, 1991), 36-37.
[16]Ratteray, "Independent Neighborhood Schools," 146.
[17]Institute for Independent Education, Fact Sheet, unnumbered page.

Parents of students at independent neighborhood schools choose to place their children and finances into these institutions for a variety of reasons. The primary reason is a learning environment which fosters academic achievement, religious and cultural development. According to the Institute for Independent Education, schools were chosen according to academics, religious or cultural affirmation, and cost.[18] The learning environment, which African-American parents seek for their children's development, can differ from school to school but the common thread is that such environments foster positive growth and development. In a 1986 interview with Chicago parents of children in African-American alternative schools, it was discovered that parents desired schools which can instill discipline and values as well as a sense of safety (from violence, drug abuse, and the like that are often experienced at some public schools) in African-American children.[19]

Parents invest heavily in their children and independent schools. Many of these institutions insist upon parental cooperation and involvement in other forms. In Connecticut, the Martin Luther King school has a three-tiered parental involvement program which emphasizes infusing the school and the surrounding community. The first level of this program involves general participation in school programs such as meetings and student performances. The Parent-Teacher Power Team, comprised of parents and staff, places parents at the second level of daily involvement in school activities, such as, extracurricular activities and raising moneys for these activities and

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[18]ibid., unnumbered page.
[19]Joan D. Ratteray, "Access to Quality: Private Schools in Chicago's Inner City," EDRS, ED 272613 (1986), 7.

for the school itself. Some parents may become engaged in vital work like, being teachers' assistants, tutors, and cafeteria aides. The final level entails participating in the decision-making processes through the School Advisory Committee. It is acceptable for parents to be involved in one or any combination of levels simultaneously.[20] Although, they may vary in intensity and enforcement, many other neighborhood schools share similar types of parental involvement programs.

Students and former students of independent neighborhood schools provide the truest measurement of success. Approximately 53,000 African-American children are currently enrolled in independent neighborhood schools. Most are in the primary grades.[21] These students are motivated by the expectations and attitudes of the parents, staff, and teachers of the independent school as well as from an overall positive educational environment. In a research report, produced by the Institute for Independent Education, the majority of students at independent schools are demonstrating above average performance in reading and math on standardized tests such as the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), California Achievement Test (CAT), Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT), and the Stanford Achievement Test (Stan).[22] It is no wonder that 44% of the 82 independent neighborhood schools surveyed may be identified as high performance schools while only 12% may be deemed low

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[20]Mary Hoover, Norma Dabney, and Shirley Lewis, Successful Black and Minority Schools: Classic Models, (San Francisco: Julian Richardson Associates, 1990), 20-22.
[21]Institute for Independent Education, Fact Sheet, unnumbered page.
[22]ibid., unnumbered page.

performance schools. This variation, among independent schools and students in the same grade level at these schools, may, in part, be attributed to many independent neighborhood schools having an open door admittance policy which permits students of nearly all skill levels to be admitted.[23]

According to the Institute for Independent Education, alumni of independent neighborhood schools, generally, have positive views of their years at these schools. In fact, 41 out of 50 or 89% of the alumni, who responded, indicated that they would recommend their former schools to others primarily due to the schools' family-like environment, discipline, unique curriculum, and the special attention and interest received from teachers. Also, former students cited ethnic affirmation or cultural awareness as something they would emphasize when recommending their former schools to others. Many of the alumni comments, regarding suggestions for improvement, involved limited finances such as the need for gymnasiums, more or better equipment such as computers, and the hiring of more teachers. Some former students expressed concern for enhanced curricula which included foreign languages, computer studies, and the sciences.[24]

Despite the needs indicated by alumni, these schools have had a tremendous impact on the prospects of alumni. The Independent Education study indicates that most of these schools have been effective in preparing students for employment and further education. Of those students who have graduated from high school,

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[23]Institute for Independent Education, On the Road to Success, 42.
[24]ibid., 50-53.

59% were enrolled in college at the time of the study, primarily in the health related or business administration and management majors. Alumni interviewed indicated that the math and reading skills, mastered at the independent schools, helped prepare them for the college experience.

Independent neighborhood schools are sometimes described as islands of success because they are independent of the public school system and of each other. Because the management, administration, and development of each neighborhood school are independent, it is quite amazing that we find so many similarities in the curricula, criteria, and missions of many of these institutions. These are factors which help the institutions, staff, parents, and children maintain focus on immediate and long-range goals.

One of the primary strengths of African-American independent schools is the basic curriculum that they offer, according to the Institute for Independent Education. The basic curriculum consists of math, science, writing, and reading skills. In addition, these schools also emphasize the teaching of morals, values, and often, cultural and community pride and responsibility.[25] Because several institutions have open-door policies for admitting students, the teaching of the basic curriculum may seem frustrating if students are not all on the same levels. However, many of the schools encourage students to move at their own paces and classes are usually small enough to work with students individually more often than in many public school classrooms. Other institutions, such as the Marcus

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[25]Gail Foster, "New York City's Wealth of Historically Black Independent Schools," Journal of Negro Education, 61 no. 2 (Spring 1992): 190-192.

Garvey school in Southern California, encourage young students to learn abstract thinking skills by teaching algebraic concepts at early grade levels. Faulkner School and the Howalton School, both in Chicago, offer intense mathematics and science curricula, while others, such as the Nairobi Day School (now closed), offer specialized instruction in reading and writing.

Janice Hale Benson contends that an ideal curriculum for African-American children must include political or cultural ideology as well as academic rigor. Benson asserts that education for African-Americans must serve the dual purposes of helping children struggle against oppression and teaching them to survive in a hostile and racist society.[26] The Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI), Hale-Benson, and many other educators and institutions advocate and have developed curricula which promote self-esteem and a healthy self-concept for African-American children. The CIBI uses a self-created social studies curriculum to promote positive African images for children aged two through thirteen with emphasis on family, community, nation, and race.[27] An African-centered pedagogy can be utilized in all subject areas. For example, CIBI has formulated a science curriculum for students in grades one through five in which students build wind tunnels, read and write about Africans in American aviation, test the effects of the position of the tail and rudder on the direction of an airplane, and develop theories on the possible origin of the wooden glider now in the Cairo Museum

[26]Janice Hale-Benson, Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles, revised edition, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 80.
[27]Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI), Positive Afrikan Images for Children Social Studies Curriculum, (Trenton, New Jersey: The Red Sea Press, Inc., 1990), 1-8.

in Egypt.[28] Note that the previous unit utilizes several styles of learning that are thought to be more in tune to the learning styles of African-American children including creativity, kinesthesis, and past-present-future continuum.

It appears that African-American independent institutions have few criteria for the admission of students. Unlike many traditional private schools, independent neighborhood schools do not normally select students based on academic scholarship or giftedness. Such open admissions policies may mean that students are accepted for the ability level at which they enter the schools and smaller classrooms in the independent schools imply that teachers are more likely to be able to spend extra time assisting the slower learners. Several schools, such as Excelsior School in Atlanta, have behavioral requirements which require parents and students to sign behavior contracts upon admission to the school and refuse students who have displayed severe behavioral problems in their former schools. Other institutions, such as those referred by the Toussaint Institute of New York, accept the challenges of working with students who have histories of problems in the public school setting and have been abandoned by the public schools.

[28]Mwalimu Shujaa, Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education, (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1994), 304-306.

Issues and Obstacles

Unfortunately, there are just as many opponents as advocates of African-American independent neighborhood schools. There are those who, as staunch integrationists, believe that any separation of individuals, on any superficial basis, results in inferior education and an inability to work with other ethnic groups, particularly European Americans.[29] Doctors Nathan and Julia Hare imply that providing African-American children with separate education may encourage these children to gain false senses of superiority just as segregation fosters a sense of inferiority.[30] However, the Hare Plan for the revising of the public education system to work for African-Americans, consists of many of the same variables and components as most independent neighborhood schools. Biggs asserts that separate schooling, by either gender or ethnicity, is unequal to integrated education because such separation deprives groups from learning about others' similarities and differences and handicaps separated students in the competition for resources and opportunities in the adult world.[31]

Despite opposition from educators and scholars, such as the Hares and Biggs, the largest and most effective obstacle to the growth of independent schools is the general public which sincerely supports the belief in the concept of a free-for-all public education system despite its numerous shortcomings. According to Ratteray, members of the American public of every ethnicity vehemently oppose

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[29]ibid., 96-99.

[30] Nathan and Julia Hare, The Hare Plan, 71 .

[31] Shirley A. Biggs, "Plight of Black Males in American Schools: Separation May Not Be the Answer," Negro Educational Review, 43 no. 1-2 (Jan-Apr 1992): 11-16.

competition from private institutions of education, believing that these schools will steal the public schools' best students and turn public schools into a "dumping ground", presumably, for underachieving or behavior disordered children. Secondly, the public seems to agree, with the government and educators, that the public schools only need to be tinkered with and students reshaped in order for the current trend of failure in the public schools to cease.[32] African-American parents, in the inner city, are further unable to fathom sending their children to private schools due to their lack of faith in educational institutions in general, and, sometimes, these parents' sense of hopelessness in altering their or their children's life situations.

There are other obstacles to the growth of independent schools, as noted by Ratteray. These include African-American middle-class abandonment, insularity of independent schools, and the lack of communication between the private sector and independent schools. Middle-class African-American parents are moving out of the inner city; and, thus, away from independent institutions. They are taking their resources, children, and support with them. In addition, many African-American institutions are perhaps too independent. That is, they know little about other independent schools in the same city or area and some are only as good as their current leadership. Although this may be changing with the advent of such organizations as the Council of Independent Black Institutions and the Institute for Independent Education, many schools are still isolated from other independent schools and their input. African-American independent

[32]Ratteray, "Access to Quality," 7-9.

institutions do not regularly advertise their schools as they ought nor does the private sector reach out to these schools. One of the problems, according to Ratteray, is that supporters may feel that, as professionals and supporters, they should have some say in the future development of independent institutions, thus imposing their expertise on grassroots practitioners. This phenomenon presents a problem as these schools wish to remain independent regardless of outside funding.[33]

Thus, the last obstacle is lack of capital. African-American independent institutions survive, largely, on tuition moneys. In fact, most independent schools derive more than 90% of their financing from tuition only. Nationally, these schools are in search for financial support to enhance their physical plants and equipment, perform longitudinal studies of their graduates, and purchase supplies and materials that will assist students in maintaining pace with technological advances. Studies indicate that independent institutions need more science laboratories and equipment, computer laboratories, libraries, and gymnasiums.[34] Although accepting financial support may mean being subjected to the whims of the foundation and corporate donating games, it may mean that African-American independent institutions have more available funds for long-term planning, staff development, marketing, and facilities development.[35] Despite their financial hardships, however, independent schools are able to provide their teachers with competitive salaries and to minimize their per student costs while,

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[33]ibid., 11.
[34]Institute, On the Road to Success, 33-35.
[35]Foster, "Wealth of Independent Black Schools," 199.

miraculously, keeping their tuition rates far below those of other private non-neighborhood schools.

Summary

Education is an important stepping-stone on the road to success. Many people believe that education has tremendous power to eradicate many of the debilitating problems we face as a nation. African-Americans are no exception. However, the literature demonstrates that African-American children are on the last rung of nearly every academic ladder. This can cause a domino effect. Our students lag behind whites and most other ethnic groups on standardized tests, in all academic subject areas including science, math, reading, and writing. Thus, many are being held back, dropping out, and flunking out of school nationwide. This means that few go on to college due to lack of skills required to pass the entrance examinations or lack of motivation after completing twelve unfulfilled years of miseducation. Without the necessary skills or high school diploma, these poor students may be stuck in low-paying jobs, forced to rely on public assistance, or encouraged to find financial rewards in illegal activities that, typically, adversely affect the neighborhoods in which they live. Thus, even if a proper education does not serve as a panacea for all of the ills that plague society, it can likely do no greater damage than the current public educational system.

Concerned African-American parents may find some refuge in the growing number of African-American independent institutions all around the country. Over 350 of these institutions exist with a variety of curricula, policies, tuition rates, missions, and philosophies.

Supporters of independent neighborhood schools sight several reasons for their importance and worthiness, including the notion that the public school system is an assimilationist melting pot which, in essence, burns minority children; evidence that African-American children learn in a way that is opposite the public school learning environment; and discrimination and maltreatment, particularly of African-American male children, by a largely white female teaching force. Parents, students, and staff work together to make successful neighborhood independent schools. Alumni of the institutions are faring well in the world and give credit to their experiences at independent schools and caring family-like atmospheres.

Additionally, the Institute for Independent Education has found that even with their open-door policies, which admit students regardless of academic achievement, many of the independent neighborhood schools had normal and above average standardized test scores. It may be that this is achieved through structured curricula that also stress religion, culture, history, and values. Perhaps it is an atmosphere which makes children want to learn, parents play active roles in the educational process, and the teachers dedicate themselves to their professions and students.

Unfortunately, there are obstacles that may impede the progress of these valuable resources. Some of the more popular schools, like Marcus Garvey School in Los Angeles and Florence Jackson Academy in Atlanta, have waiting lists for students wanting to attend these schools. Many independent schools welcome more students. Public interest is strong in support of the public education system. Some lay persons even accuse the private schools of

of stripping the public schools of the brightest children, thereby, making the public schools dumping grounds. Other obstacles include middle-class African-American flight from the community and schools, independent schools' isolation, and, most importantly, financial strife. This last variable cripples independent neighborhood schools in upgrading their institutions and soliciting more students.

Chapter 4

Findings, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the related literature regarding the performance of African-American children in America's public educational system and propose an alternative educational system for African-American students.

Findings

The following findings were derived from the information obtained from this study:

1. African-American students perform at relatively low levels academically.

2. Relatively few African-American students meet entrance requirements to college.

3. A relatively high number of African-American students fail to qualify for high-paying jobs because of their low levels of education.

4. Many African-American persons obtain financial rewards from illegal activities which have adverse effects on their neighborhoods.

5. African-American students have cognitive and learning styles that are different from teaching styles emphasized in the public school to teach other students.

6. African-American independent institutions are being developed and used to educate African-American students.

7. Parents, teachers, and students cooperate to make independent neighborhood schools successful.

8. Alumni of the independent schools believe their educational competency levels have been greatly enhanced through their independent school experiences.

9. Some lay persons accuse the independent schools of stripping the public school systems of their brightest children which makes the public schools a dumping ground.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. African-American students' academic performance is generally at a relatively low level compared to other ethnic groups and the national norms.

2. Many African-American students may be held back or may drop out or flunk out of school.

3. Relatively few African-American students attend colleges because they lack adequate skills and abilities to pass required entrance examinations.

4. Some African-American students feel they have been miseducated even after completing twelve years of education.

5. Many African-American students may receive low pay for their work because they may not have earned high school diplomas and, as a result, are not qualified for higher paying jobs.

6. Some African-American parents are supporting African-American independent schools for their children due to problems perceived in the public schools.

7. Cooperative efforts of African-American parents, students, and staffs have made independent neighborhood schools successful.

8. Lack of adequate financial support and public denouncement of non-public, non-integrated schools have prohibited the up-grading of these institutions and the recruitment of students.

Implications

The conclusions, drawn from the findings of this study seem to warrant the following implications:

1. African-American students may become more competent in performing academic tasks if techniques appropriate to their cognitive processes were utilized in planning curricula.

2. Traditional teaching methods appear to adversely affect the educational experiences of African-American students, particularly males.

3. The parents and teachers of African-American students need more appropriate working relationships with students to develop wholesome environments conducive to the development of good self-image and self-concept.

4. There appears to be relatively strong support for independent educational institutions controlled by local communities.

Recommendations

African-American independent neighborhood schools can offer valuable alternatives to the crumbling public educational system. The implications, developed from the conclusions, sanction the following recommendations:

1. The quality of education, offered by the independent neighborhood schools, be examined thoroughly to determine the level of community support needed.

2. Various forms of support, for example, the use of vouchers, corporate and private endowments, and parental services in exchange for tuition scholarships, be more fully explored as viable means of supporting independent neighborhood schools.

3. More appropriate teaching techniques be utilized in instructing African-American students.

4. Further research be conducted on the specific techniques used in successful independent neighborhood schools.

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